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METROPOLIS

DELUXE PAINT JOB

Armed with a Newtonian color wheel,
the architects at Stamberg Aferiat
infuse a midcentury hotel
with a burst of visual energy.

by
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A rendering of the Saguaro Hotel in Scottsdale, Arizona, for a renovation project by the architects Peter Stamberg and Paul Aferiat. The design pays homage to the Sonoran Desert's landscape by blending the original building's international style architecture with the colors of 12 indigenous flowers.

Faced with the challenge of refreshing a hotel built in the early 1970s in Scottsdale, Arizona, Andrew Zabler, the founder and CEO of the Sydell Group, went to the architects Peter Stamberg and Paul Aferiat and asked them to turn the property into “the most welcoming of places in the entire city.” In its previous incarnation as the Mondrian Scottsdale, the 194-room hotel had been painted entirely white. It’s situated at the center of the city’s downtown adjacent to the retro, seventies-era Civic Center Mall and Old Town’s central shopping and arts district. “Scottsdale had written into its building code that everything had to be natural and about the desert, so colors had to be beige and sand colored,” Stamberg says. “The planning commission is so strict that when you change your socks, you basically have to call them.”

The solution? The New York-based Stamberg Aferiat Architecture realized that the desert was full of inspiration, and with the help of the landscape architect Chris Winters, it identified a dozen indigenous wildflowers, which it presented to the planning department as the basis for color choices. It was this homage to the landscape of the Southwest that blended the original building’s modernist architecture with vibrant yellow, orange, and pink tones.

The architects then took out their secret weapon—the Newtonian color wheel, a system of hues outlined by Sir Isaac Newton where red, green, and blue are deemed primary colors and their complementary

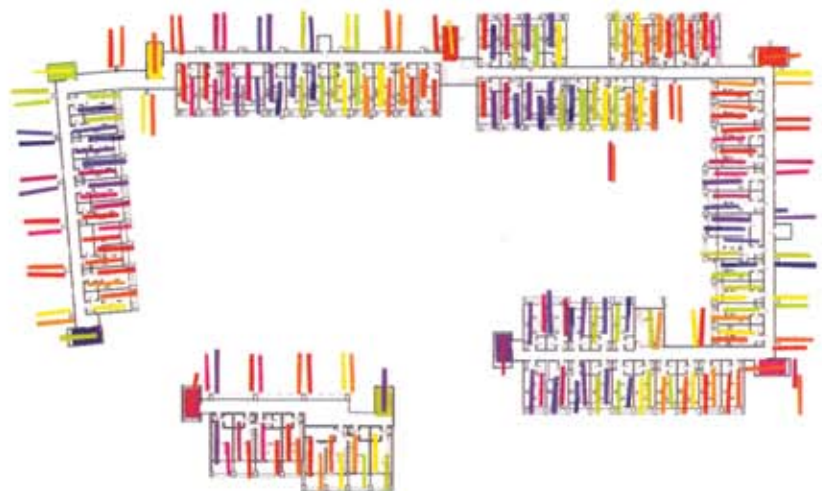
hues (cyan, magenta, and yellow) are placed across from them on a circle. Armed with a floor plan of the hotel, the designers set out to apply color. “The outside balconies have two walls, so the west-facing walls had the colors of the spectrum wheel going in one direction, and the east-facing walls had the colors of the spectrum going in the other direction,” Stamberg says. “The result is that the balcony color came into the room complete on one wall, and it’s balanced by another color to be used on the cabinetwork of every room. Every room is different.”

Fortunately, the team met Kim Chalfin, their “guardian angel” at the planning department, who understood that the proposal was in harmony with the natural environment. And after Stamberg Aferiat showed the planning department a full-size mock-up of one third of the courtyard, the project was quickly approved. The architects continued their strategy of using color accents, paying careful attention to interior details such as custom textiles and well-coordinated sheets and blankets. The hotel has been renamed the Saguaro, after the iconic cactus of the Sonoran desert, and the Sydell Group now plans a chain of hotels that use the colors of the Southwest as inspiration. Stamberg and Aferiat have just completed their second renovation for the company, a redo of a former Holiday Inn in Palm Springs, California. 

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Above: For the walls of the Picante Pool area, the architects chose splashes of Carrot Stick and Deep Carnation. Left: Custom-dyed synthetic fabrics were used on upholstered outdoor furniture. Right: The paint plan is based on Newtonian color theory and uses complementary color combinations.





SCARLET HEDGE
NETTLE



RED



DESERT MARIPOSA
LILY



RUMBA ORANGE



CALIFORNIA POPPY



CARROT STICK



CALIFORNIA POPPY



CITRUS BLAST



COMMON SUNFLOWER



SUN KISSED YELLOW



STAGHORN CHOLLA



NEW LIME



LANTANA CAMARA



EVE GREEN



TALL MOUNTAIN
LARKSPUR



GLOXINIA



LEWIS FLAX



ANCHUSA



DESERT RUELLIA



CHARMED VIOLET



RED DESERT GLOBE
MALLOW



HOT LIPS



PARRY'S PENSTEMON



DEEP CARNATION



The colors of the artificial waterfall, above, are based on the California poppy and the red desert globe mallow. The outdoor fireplace area, below, was inspired by the red desert globemallow and the desert mariposa lily. The architects specified the shades using their preferred Benjamin Moore color system; the contractors used Sherwin-Williams paint.



The 12 colors used throughout the project were based on indigenous Arizona wildflowers, which the architects selected in collaboration with their landscape architect, Chris Winters.



Stamberg Aferiat continued their strategy of using color accents, paying careful attention to interior details.



Naturally-colored pigskin was used on the desks as well as the handcrafted traditional Mexican Equipale furniture in the guest rooms. The latter was chosen both because it was inexpensive and because it was used by the Mexican modernist architect Luis Barragán, who was an inspiration for the project.



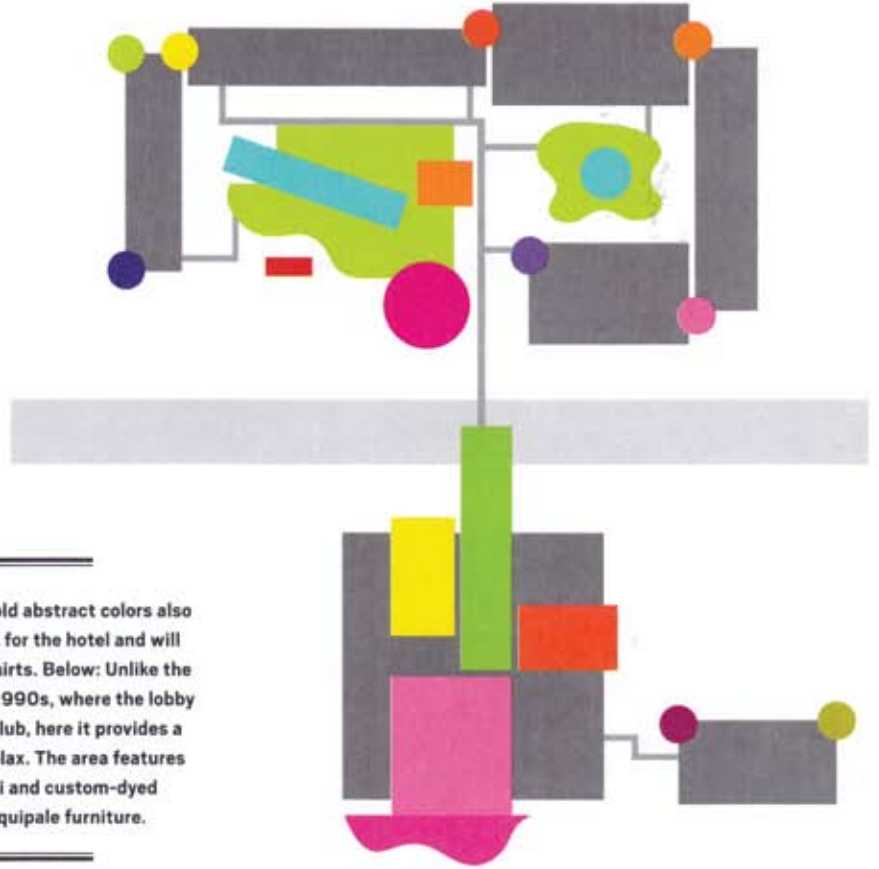
The inspiration for the coverlet was a striped blanket that the architects purchased on a trip to Machu Picchu. They found a cheaper version from a Mexican supplier that was able to custom-color the stripes.



Taken by Gunter Marx, the large monochromatic photographs of saguaro cacti that appear in each room act as a counterpoint to the strong use of solid colors on the wall and on cabinetwork.



Left: The colors used on the outside balconies flow directly onto a wall of each of the guest rooms, and a contrasting hue is used for the cabinetwork. This results in 194 unique rooms.



Right: A floor plan in bold abstract colors also acts as a logo of sorts for the hotel and will soon be printed on T-shirts. Below: Unlike the boutique hotels of the 1990s, where the lobby acted as a loud nightclub, here it provides a space to lounge and relax. The area features lighting from Moooi and custom-dyed banquettes and Equipale furniture.

Top, Jeff Zaruba/courtesy Stamberg Aferiat Architecture; bottom right, Gunter Marx Photography/Corbis

Bottom, Tim Street Porter; all images courtesy Stamberg Aferiat Architecture

